



**Minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> Senate Meeting of IIIT-D held on July 1, 2009, at 3 PM in Conference Room, Library Building, IIIT Delhi.**

***Following members were present:***

- Prof. Pankaj Jalote, Director, (Chairman),
- Dr. A. Subramanian, (Secretary),
- Dr. Veena Bansal,
- Dr. Astrid Kiehn,
- Dr. Mayank Vatsa,
- Dr. Richa Singh,
- Dr. Vikram Goyal,
- Mr. Sunpreet Arora, (Student member),
- Mr. Saurav Maitra, (Student member),
- Dr. Saugat Sen, Cadence.

***Members Present through Audio Conferencing:***

- Prof. Kamal Karnapalam, IIIT Hyderabad,
- Prof. Rajat Moona, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur,
- Prof. Prem Kalra, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi,
- Dr. C. Anantram, TCS,
- Dr. Manish Gupta, Associate Director, IBM IRL,
- Dr. Pawan Goel, Adobe Systems, Noida

**4.1. Chairman's opening remarks.**

The Chairman extended welcome to all the members and who were on audio-conferencing mode. Chairman informed the Senate that in view of the Supreme Court ruling on Anti-Ragging effective steps and code would be put in place.

**4.2. Confirmation of the minutes of 3<sup>rd</sup> Senate Meeting.**

The Minutes of 3<sup>rd</sup> Senate meeting had been circulated and as there was no comment the same were taken as confirmed.

**4.3 To consider the disciplinary case against Mr. Pranshu Raghuvansh**

*[Documents sent to Senate members earlier: Show cause notices; their replies; the minutes of the disciplinary committee meeting; the background note; statements of Shashank and Pranshu given to the Senate; Statements of Ishaan, Pranshu, and Shashank given earlier; statement of Honey; the High court orders.]*

The Senate Chairman (the Director of IIITD) first explained the situation. He informed about the order passed by the Hon. High Court laying a process to be followed by the Senate, which is being followed. As part of this process, a written charge sheet was given to Mr. Pranshu Raghuvansh (dated: May 22, 2009), to which he sent a written reply (dated: June 23, 2009). The charge sheet, the reply, and other documents including the statements of students and earlier recommendation of the disciplinary committee, have been sent to the entire Senate. Based on all the facts, as per the Hon Court's order, the Senate has been requested to give a reasoned order.

He further requested the Senate that in keeping with the spirit of the Hon Court's judgment, the case should be considered a-fresh. He also requested the Senate not to be weighed down by the possibility of further litigation, but act as it sees appropriate, in a free and fair manner. He further requested the Senate to first discuss the extent of the indiscipline involved, and thereafter discuss the quantum of punishment, if any, to be given.

In response to some of the points made in the reply, the Registrar informed the Senate (i) that Academic Institutions have inherent powers to enforce and maintain discipline in academic matters, and IIIT-D also has these powers to take necessary actions to maintain discipline (Statute – 7 (3), 21(2)). (ii) Necessary steps were taken a few weeks ago with regards to the security agency and the guard. (iii) The joint statement of Ishaan and Shashank was not sent, as they had given separate statements later after admitting that they had not explained the complete picture earlier (in any case, this document was already available to Mr. Pranshu from earlier proceedings).

During the course of the discussions, Mr. Pranshu was invited to the Senate meeting. He made some statements to the Senate (which he also submitted in written form.) Mr Shashank was also invited and he stated that he has nothing more to add beyond his written submission. Mr. Ishaan, even though he was issued a show-cause notice and asked to be present for the Senate meeting, neither sent a reply nor was present, even though the show-cause notice clearly stated that if he does not reply within a week, the charges will be assumed to be true (It should be pointed out that after receiving the show cause notice, he did ask for documents based on which the charges were made, and these were provided to him.)

**After a discussion, the following conclusions were reached:**

- 1 It is clearly established through various statements and evidences that two major acts of indiscipline, both extremely serious, were committed on the night of April 23rd, 2009:
  - i. An illegal entry was made into Ms. Astrid's room, and a question paper for the exam was obtained. Not only do the students involved in the act admit to this, Mr. Honey Singla's statement also shows that Ishaan knew some exam questions on the night of 23rd.
  - ii. Academic records were altered – both in the hard copy folder maintained, as well as the electronic file in the laptop of Ms. Astrid. The actual records show this, and statements of Ishaan and Shashank also establish it.
  
- 2 Mr. Pranshu Raghuvansh was knowingly a part of the group that planned and committed the act of illegally entering the room of Ms. Astrid's and obtaining the question paper (their "common cause"). This is established on the following grounds:
  - (a) Shashank had said that Ishaan informed him and Pranshu after meeting Ms. Astrid around 3:30 pm that "we can access TOC exam paper as he has some mutual understanding with the security guard of the night shift ... and we mildly accepted but in a light way what he was saying" (Ishaan says that the "guard was known to all three of us"). So, it is clear that a plan was hatched early in the afternoon for the acts done in the night, and Pranshu very much knew about it. (Ishaan, in fact, states that Pranshu participated actively and entered the room and tampered the records along with him.) It may be noted that Pranshu is not a resident of the hostel but was present in the hostel on the said night.
  - (b) In the initial statements given by Pranshu, Shashank, and Ishaan there is no mention of "going to IIITD to play pool". And this was not suggested even in the interactions during Sat and Mon (25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>). This "purpose" is stated first in the written statements submitted to the first Senate meeting on the evening of April 28, clearly suggesting that it is an afterthought and an attempt to escape the consequences of their acts.
  - (c) At no point in their statements or in interactions did Shashank and Ishaan indicate that Pranshu was just an "innocent bystander". If there was an innocent man getting caught, surely his friends (which they were, even according to Pranshu) will try to help him so he does not get punished!
  - (e) In general, the reasonable response of an intelligent person who is not involved in an act as serious as this would be to leave the place immediately, and report it to the right authorities. This holds even more here since Pranshu was already under warning from the Institute for an act of indiscipline and

academic dishonesty. Pranshu did neither – he stayed in the building till the end and finally left with the group about 2 hours later (during which the room was illegally entered into, the paper was stolen, the paper was copied by hand, record were changed, printing of records was tried, etc.) This again shows that he was very much a part of the group.

- (f) It was said in the court documents that Pranshu “... saw the conduct of the students, he went to the guard of the Institute and informed him but he was indifferent”. But the guard mentions no such reporting by Pranshu in his statement (and denied it during interactions). If he had reported the incident to the guard, even though the guard was indifferent (as Pranshu claims), Pranshu could not have assumed that the guard will not report it to the authorities, and so the natural thing expected of him was to report it to the Institute authorities the same night (e.g. by sending an email) or early next day, particularly if he was not involved. The fact that he made no such attempt, even after it was announced in the class that the break-in has been discovered, indicates that he was very much a part of the act, and not an innocent bystander who tried to stop the serious act, as he claims.
- (g) It is evident that Ishaan had planned this act early in the afternoon and came in the night to execute his plan – otherwise he (both Shashank and Pranshu claim that he signed) will have no reason to sign a fake name in the two night entry registers. Since he came with the intent of “accessing the TOC paper”, he would do everything possible to ensure that there are no witnesses and will clearly not want to bring witnesses along – and according to Pranshu “Ishaan suggested that we go to play pool...”. Furthermore, if an “innocent bystander” is witnessing a crime, how can the person committing the crime be so sure that the witness will not report the crime. As Pranshu’s statement does not indicate any coercion/threat from Ishaan to keep silent, it is clear Ishaan was certain that Pranshu will not say anything – this kind of confidence can be there only if Pranshu was a “partner in crime”.
- (h) One cannot lose sight of the fact that the present incident is second offense committed by Pranshu and Ishaan. From the incident of indiscipline in Jan 2009 it is already known that Pranshu is willing to use dishonest means to help his friend Ishaan, even when he himself has nothing to benefit from it. As per Pranshu’s confession: “I, Pranshu, went to the exam...to help my friend Ishaan. We planned that we sit close but Goel Sir made me sit away from him. Finally when paper ended...we decided.... that I should give my paper with his name”. This whole plan was clearly to help Ishaan, as Pranshu, even after getting a 0 in that test, passed comfortably and got a B grade. So, he clearly seems to be inclined and willing to help Ishaan even by participating in acts of severe indiscipline/academic dishonesty where he has nothing to gain. (For this act, as a concession/leniency he (and Ishaan) was only placed under Warning. It is sad to note that this same concession/leniency is now being twisted to suggest that it was a minor act.)

- (i) The fact that Pranshu did not attempt some questions only shows that he could not figure out how to answer them. Even Ishaan did not attempt all questions. Answering the question, even if known, requires knowledge and skill, particularly since one cannot go to anyone else to get the solutions, that too at the last minute.
- 3 On Fri afternoon, Pranshu, along with three others, went to meet the guard at Dwarka Mor and complimented/thanked him for not identifying the group earlier in the day when Institute authorities had taken the guard to the hostel. The guard has stated this clearly in his written statement (dated May 02). This was a clear attempt to cover up their acts.
- 4 Though academic performance is not relevant while discussing such acts of indiscipline/dishonesty, it may be mentioned that Pranshu is not as good a student as he claims – in the Discrete Maths course (which he refers to as theory course in first semester), he stood 20 (and not 5<sup>th</sup> as he has claimed in court documents), and overall in the first semester there are 16 students with a higher SGPA than his. In the winter 2009 semester his performance was not good (in mid-sem of TOC he got 5 marks out of max of 20). In the summer term he claims he is “ranked first”. However, this is not true, and it should be noted that the students in this summer term are those who failed the subject earlier.
- 5 However, it could not be established with a reasonable certainty that Mr. Pranshu was directly involved in tampering of academic records (though Ishaan’s statement says that he was involved in that also, the same is not corroborated by statements of Shashank, who only refers to Pranshu’s involvement in this as hearsay). Further, “staying in the hostel without permission” is a minor offense, and as such the Senate felt that there is no point in deliberating on it further.
- 6 Such an audacious act of indiscipline/academic dishonesty has not been committed in Institutes like IIT Kanpur, IIT Delhi, and IIIT Hyderabad in the last many years, (as has been informed by Senate members from these Institutes). There does not seem to be any act of indiscipline in an academic institute that is worse than this. Participating in such an act clearly deserves severe punishment that is appropriate for this type of act. By not severely punishing such an act, the Senate will not be discharging its responsibilities properly, as it will only embolden other students to venture into such acts, and demoralize the faculty – this act has already created a fear among the faculty and many are now keeping academic and official records elsewhere.
- 7 During the discussion on quantum of punishment, a suspension of one year was considered. However, most Senate members felt that a one year expulsion is an appropriate punishment for less serious violations than this, like copying in the exam etc. (indeed, some senate members remembered reading about a case where a student was suspended for one year for having a chit with notes in his pocket

during the exam.) It was felt that if such a serious act of indiscipline is not given a much stricter punishment, then the institute will lose its ability to give appropriate punishment to other "less serious" acts of academic indiscipline, as this case will be quoted by students in future.

- 8 In view of the above the entire Senate (with one dissension) agreed that the following punishment is just and fair for Mr. Pranshu: He is expelled immediately from the Institute and his program terminated. However, keeping in mind his future career and in the interest of consistency with the decision for the other two students involved in the act, he be given till next morning after the order is issued, to withdraw, if he so wishes, failing which the expulsion order should be issued. The Director is authorized to take necessary steps in this regard.
- 9 As regards Mr. Ishaan and Mr. Shashank there is no change, and their withdrawal from the Institute remains in effect.

\*\*\*\*\*

During the course of deliberations, the Senate made some other observations, which are mentioned here,

1. Most members of the Senate felt that it is very unfortunate that a student is interacting with the Senate with an aggressive and totally unapologetic attitude, and trying to pressurize an academic body by quoting laws and judgments from different countries, and questioning the very basis of an Institute's ability to take suitable actions to maintain discipline. The Senate is also pained by the underlying belief displayed wherein a student feels that it is his right not to be punished and his acts need to be excused (or at most a fine is imposed), and unless all acceptable and unacceptable behaviors are stated in black and white and told, he cannot be held guilty of a misbehavior or indiscipline.
2. It was also felt that the brighter and smarter people have a greater responsibility to preserve the necessary moral and ethical standards and be more scrupulous in their actions than others. And Pranshu claims (and his academic record shows) that he is the best student among the three. So, he should be willing to assume a greater responsibility.
3. Some senate members explicitly said that they are looking to forgive, but were saddened to note that despite such a serious offense having been committed, the students were just not willing to accept mistakes and ask for forgiveness. On the contrary, one student (Pranshu) claims he was there just to play pool and saw a serious crime against his institute being committed but felt no need to do anything to protect the academic integrity of the Institute or report it; the other (Shashank) now claims he did not copy the question paper but something else since the final question paper was not exactly the same as what he copied but only partially so; and the third (Ishaan) just does not reply. And the families seem to be supporting

the view that once their adult child has taken an admission in an institute, he has already passed the life-test and now it is his right to remain in the institute regardless of his actions, even if it requires pressurizing the academicians with unnecessary paper work and legal jargon.

4. Both the student members of the Senate, indicated that in their batch there is a divided opinion - some favor expulsion, while others favor a lighter punishment of suspension for a year or so. They also indicated that many students are dismayed and shocked that Mr Pranshu is actually back in the Institute after what he did.
5. During his submission when Mr. Pranshu read out his point about Dr. Subramanian, who issued the show cause notice being a member of the Senate, it was clarified that the Registrar (Dr. Subramanian) is the secretary of the Senate, and NOT a voting member.
6. It was also clarified that an Academic Senate generally deliberates upon a disciplinary matter based on the facts and circumstances and records placed before it. It was pointed out that in IIT Kanpur, as has been checked, even parents of a student have not been invited, and students themselves are invited rarely. No Academic Senate can allow the senate floor to become the argument ground for lawyers - there are other forums for that.
7. At one point Mr. Pranshu was told that identity of Jury is often kept secret, to which he replied that there is no jury system in India, and we should not look at what exists in the US. Then the very next minute he quotes some case from US to justify his point (it is mentioned in his submission). He also contradicts himself about his level of preparedness – in his reply he claims “my preparation was complete by 9:45 pm. After that I left ... for my home.... but was not allowed by the guard (as it was after 10 pm)”. In his typed statement to Senate on April 28, he states that “Ishaan asked...I told him that I had prepared for 60-70%. Then Ishaan suggested that we should go ...to play pool”. Not only are the levels of preparedness mentioned is different in the two statements, in the April 28 statement there is no mention of an attempt to go home (instead suggests that they went to IIITD directly.)
8. Though the Registrar has clarified why the joint statement was not sent, it should be pointed out that as Mr. Pranshu himself admits that he went to play pool along with others, any statement that does not mention his presence (as was the case with the joint statement) is clearly incomplete. His claim that “in their second statements, as an afterthought, they (Ishaan and Shashank) involved me also to confuse the authorities and complicate the matter further” is devoid of any logic when his coming to IIITD campus with the group is not even challenged by Mr. Pranshu.

9. After a number of court cases were quoted by Mr. Pranshu (he was reading from a statement written by him, but at many places could not read or pronounce some of the words clearly), the Senate further re-affirmed that it will not succumb to this pressure tactic of quoting legal cases to an academic body, and that it will apply itself as all academic senates do - in a free and fair manner keeping in mind the interests of the Institute, preservation of academic values, and the interests of the students - those involved in the act as well as other students of the Institute who are affected by the image and quality of the Institute (as one Senate member said: What will be the credibility of the Institute in upholding academic values, if students involved in such acts are allowed to remain in the Institute. And what will be the Institute's moral authority for punishing acts of academic dishonesty and indiscipline.).
10. In various discussions it has been pointed out to students that withdrawal from an Institute, particularly after the first year, is not "the end of career" as it entails a limited loss and the student can take admission elsewhere, and that they should consider this as a life-lesson and correct their value systems and vow never to indulge in such acts again. It is with this spirit, that this may become an "opportunity" to learn a hard lesson, rather than just punish the student, the Senate finally agreed to give the option of withdrawal. This was despite reservations of some members who felt that giving this option may be "misused" by Mr. Pranshu in court to suggest that we are not sure of our decision or something like that. It is in the same spirit that the order is being issued to him on July 10, as he requested. It should be noted that in case of withdrawal, the official transcript can be issued to the student, who may use it for transferring credits to the new program – many colleges allow this. In this case, there may not even be a one-year loss.

**4.4. Request of Abhishek Singh regarding repeating 1<sup>st</sup> year (Roll No: 2008003)**

Abhishek Singh, a student who was admitted in the B.Tech (IT) program in 2008, has received F in 6 courses. He has given medical certificates showing that he has been suffering from depression. He has requested that he be allowed to repeat the first year, i.e. start afresh. The Senate agreed that his request be acceded, and he will repeat the entire first year afresh. How to report this first year in the final transcript will be decided later.

**4.5. Brief report on the entrance test for B.Tech (IT) program, 2009**

The senate was appraised about the process of the entrance test for B Tech (IT) programme 2009. Based on the first counseling held on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2009 following number of students was given admission in different categories:

Delhi General	:	35
Delhi SC	:	8
Delhi ST	:	NIL
Delhi PH	:	2



Delhi CW	:	2
Delhi outside General	:	7
Delhi outside SC	:	1
<u>Delhi outside ST</u>	:	<u>1</u>
<b>Total</b>	:	<b>53</b>

The remaining vacant seats will be filled in during the course of second counseling by following the due process of conversion and the final list of admitted students will be placed in the next senate meeting for ratification.

#### **4.6. Grading Scheme at IIIT-D**

There has been a discussion on the grading scheme that should be used. A poll was done of faculty and students across the world to find out what was the preference. The scheme that was the overwhelming favorite of all was A, A (-), B, B (-), C, C (-), D, and F (this is the scheme IIT Delhi also uses). This was preferred by faculty of IIIT-Delhi, students of IIIT-Delhi, as well as students from IIT Kanpur (where A, B, C, D, F system is used). It was felt that this scheme will allow greater fairness in assigning grades. However, there was also a need to explicitly recognize excellent performers in a course, which this scheme does not support. Finally, it was decided that an additional A(+) grade be added to the preferred scheme, which will carry the same points (10) as A, but will recognize the outstanding performers. Hence, the final grading scheme, along with the points for each grade is:

A (+): 10, A: 10, A (-): 9, B: 8, B (-): 7, C: 6, C (-): 5, D: 4, F: 2

#### **4.7. Python as the language for Intro to Programming Course**

This item was raised in previous senate meeting. Subsequent to that, feedback on this was obtained from academics across the world. Though there is no clear agreement, many considered this as a positive and progressive way to go, and many universities in US are now using it, including MIT. The main benefits were: it is easy to learn, is powerful and allows students to write non-trivial programs fast, and that it is easy to transition from Python to C/C++. It was agreed that Python be used for the Intro to Programming Course.

#### **4.8 Any other item with permission of Chairman**

Request for extension in joining the Ph.D Programme by Hunny Mehrotra was considered and acceded to.

There being not other item, the meeting ended with vote of thanks.

\*\*\*\*\*